

THE

MONTHLY



VOLUME 19

SAN FRANCISCO, NOVEMBER, 1937

NUMBER 11

Red-naped Sapsucker in Contra Costa County

In *The Condor* for March-April, 1936, Mr. Paul F. Covel reports taking a Red-naped Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius nuchalis*), in Santa Cruz County December 11, 1934. He states he has found only four previous records for the San Francisco Bay region. Having noted this, I felt that it might be of interest to readers of *THE GULL* to know that on April 30 and May 1, 1936, near Diablo Country Club, Contra Costa County, this bird came many times to a tree to inspect sapsucker holes.

He was only ten feet from me and his crimson head bordered by black, crimson throat and black breast, and narrow crimson line at nape as well as his other characteristic markings were plainly seen.

Red-breasted Sapsuckers were in the neighborhood at the same time.

I did not have the bird in hand but as I have seen the Red-naped Sapsucker many times and as this one was only a few feet distant there could be no question as to the bird's identity.

Mrs. C. S. Deuprey, San Francisco, California. October 14, 1937.



The Pileated Woodpecker

The writer had the pleasure of spending Sunday and Monday, October 11 and 12, 1937, at the Calaveras Big Trees situated about twenty-five miles in a north-easterly direction from Angels Camp; elevation at the grove is about 4,200 feet.

Knowing that the Pileated Woodpecker, sometimes called the "Cock-of-the-Woods," was a resident of that vicinity, a constant lookout was kept during various walks, in the hope that this interesting and beautiful bird would be seen. Also, ears were carefully listening for that powerful wild call so thrilling to bird enthusiasts.

Sunday passed without success but on Monday evening about 5 o'clock a final walk through the park was taken in the hope that persistency would be rewarded.

The main trail through the forest is a circular one; it leads through magnificent redwoods (*Sequoia gigantea*), tall sugar pines with beautiful pendant cones, firs and dogwood. The evening was particularly inspiring as the sun was sinking in the west, the air crystalline with a clear blue sky and just enough moving cloud to constantly vary the coloring. Shafts of light passing through the trees added to the picture.

After walking about a quarter of a mile loud blows against a tree were heard, reminding one of a steel riveting machine in action. Intently listening and determining that the sound came from the opposite side of the grove, no time was lost in leaving the pathway and hurrying through the forest toward the point indicated by the sound. When about midway there resounded through the woods that loud wild call "kah-kah-kah-kah," which sends a thrill through one and leaves

no doubt as to the bird's identity. Cautiously moving forward, listening and watching, the writer finally determined that the bird was in one of three trees—an immense Sequoia or one of two sugar pines nearby. The blows continued for a few moments, then the woodpecker dropped out of the upper part of the Sequoia into plain view upon the trunk, just beneath the lower limbs. Watching him closely with binoculars his method of striking the bark was noted; head at an acute angle, first to the right side and then to the left, he struck powerful blow after blow until the chips fell to the ground.

It probably was the male as the beautiful scarlet crest seemed to cover the whole top of the bird's head reaching to the bill. In a few moments he left the Sequoia and flew to one of the sugar pines, calling loudly as he went. In a short time he returned to the Sequoia, and to my surprise, entered a hole, probably the nest, located just below a knot or burl, a distance of approximately 150 to 175 feet above the ground. He remained in the hole about five minutes, then came out and went again to the sugar pine, calling several times. He then left for a different part of the grove, again calling frequently and rapidly. Shortly thereafter similar calls were heard from a distance but in the direction to which the bird flew, this leading the writer to believe that it was an answer from its mate. Observation continued for about twenty minutes. The writer is not prepared to say that the bird was nesting at this late date but evidently the hole it was seen to enter was a former nesting site.

Joseph J. Webb, San Francisco, California. October 20, 1937.



Woodpeckers

In San Francisco there are very few members of the woodpecker family to be found. During the last few weeks I have had several inquiries about woodpeckers in San Francisco and believe that the following information may be of interest:

The Red-shafted Flicker is a very common species found in several localities throughout the city.

California Woodpecker: "Directory to the Bird-life of the San Francisco Bay Region," by Joseph Grinnell and Margaret W. Wythe, states: "common resident of wooded territory in all the Bay counties except San Francisco." In searching records for San Francisco I find that one was seen in Golden Gate Park in 1917 and another in 1933 by members of the Association during the taking of the Christmas census. Six were seen by Mr. Carl R. Smith in Laurel Hill Cemetery, February 2, 1934 (see THE GULL, April, 1934), and another in this same cemetery, March 26, 1934, by Mrs. Albert B. Stephens. Two were seen by Mr. Arthur H. Myer at Lake Merced, one on November 30 and another on December 14, 1935. Two were seen in Golden Gate Park, September 13, 1937, by Erwin Berliner.

Lewis Woodpecker: Dr. Grinnell describes this species as an "erratic winter visitant." One was seen by Carl R. Smith in Laurel Hill Cemetery, February 2, 1934 (see THE GULL, April, 1934). One was seen in Lafayette Park, San Francisco, October 20, 1937, by Mrs. T. H. Brown and verified by Mrs. L. W. Cummings and Mrs. Albert B. Stephens.

The Red-breasted Sapsucker is a winter visitant in limited numbers. It has been found a number of times in Golden Gate Park.

Cabanis (Hairy) Woodpecker; one record in the garden of Mr. and Mrs. Oliver J. Millard, San Francisco, September 8, 1937.

Willow Woodpecker, which inhabits willows along streams, has been found at Lake Merced, Golden Gate Park and at Mountain Lake in the Presidio. There are a number of records but this species is by no means abundant.

Nuttall Woodpecker: Dr. Grinnell states it has been noted at San Francisco but no dates or locations given.

Can anyone add other records for San Francisco to this list?

Laura A. Stephens.

Field Trip for October

The regular field trip for October was taken on Sunday, the 17th, to Lake Merced. A foggy but warm morning gave way to bright sunshine and birding improved as the day wore on.

The usual route from Fleishhacker Playground was followed, but it would now seem advisable to have the trip begin at the Estero car stop on the Municipal "M" line and proceed down the canyon to the north lake, along the west side of it and then around the larger south lake. This route was tried by two members and the result was highly gratifying. No less than twelve species were seen that were not again recorded for the remainder of the trip. By following this plan the trip would be approximately the same as taken by the Association in former years and in all probability our list for the area would also be more complete.

The abundance of Coots and a Herring Gull, apparently sick or exhausted, provided the only bits of special interest up to lunch time. The gull was found on the edge of the lake just a few feet from the path, but made no attempt to escape even when the entire party gathered to observe him at very close range. Later he was seen to voluntarily fly away.

Near the pumping station two adult Sora Rail were seen. Good views of one were obtained but the other could not be frightened out of the tules.

After luncheon the south end of the lake was visited and, as usual, our best birding was obtained at that spot. While a few of the group tried with indifferent success to flush a Virginia Rail, the rest walked on a short distance and soon discovered a Florida Gallinule. Contrary to its usual wariness this bird remained out in the open as long as we stayed to watch it though it was, however, quite a distance from the shore.

A group of Baldpates nearby proved to be harboring a single female teal in their midst. As it took flight we noticed the blue shoulder-patches which proclaimed it to be a Cinnamon Teal. The Baldpates swam with calm dignity out into the lake, followed with less dignity but a bit more speed, by a female Shoveller. Evidently alarmed because of the actions of the other birds a Gadwall swam out from a patch of tules almost at our feet and also took to wing.

A short while later an owl was flushed from the side of a steep bank and flew into a willow thicket. The bird was seen by only a few and they had but fleeting views of it. The bird was described as small and reddish-brown and as it was typically a "Saw-whet environment" it seemed that it might be a Saw-whet Owl. However, it flew from the ground and one observer put its wing spread at 18 inches. These facts combined with the observation of a Burrowing Owl with a slightly injured wing near the spot on the following Friday, tends to discredit the possibility of it having been a Saw-whet Owl.

Our list, totaling sixty-two, is very encouraging and is the largest the Association has obtained at Lake Merced in October since 1931. Species marked with an asterisk were seen in the canyon only. Eared, Western and Pied-billed Grebes; Farallon Cormorant; California Heron; Mallard, Gadwall, Baldpate, Cinnamon Teal, Shoveller, Ring-necked, Canvas-back, Scaup and Ruddy Ducks; *Sharp-shinned and Sparrow Hawks; *Quail; Virginia Sora and Black Rails; Florida Gallinule; Coot; Killdeer; Glaucous-winged, Western, Herring and California Gulls; Owl (sp. ?); Anna Hummingbird; Kingfisher; Flicker; Willow Woodpecker; Black Phoebe; *Horned Lark; Barlow Chickadee; Bush-tit; Vigers and Tule Wrens; *Robin; *Hermit Thrush; *Ruby-crowned Kinglet; Pipit; Dusky, Audubon and *Townsend Warblers; Yellow-throat; *English Sparrow; *Meadowlark; Red-winged, Tricolored and Brewer Blackbirds; Purple and House Finches; Pine Siskin; Willow Goldfinch; *San Francisco Towhee; Junco; Nuttall, Golden-crowned, Fox, *Lincoln and Song Sparrows.

Members attending were: Mr. and Mrs. Millard, Stephens; Mesdames Baer, Courtright, Kelly, Rocca, Saunders; Misses Blake, Cave, Conant, Gilliam, MacIver, Papina; Messrs. Berliner, Bolander, Hansen, Kirker, Power, Wells, with eight guests; Mrs. Munn with five girl scouts, Miss de Cremer and Mr. McClintock.

Gordon Bolander, Leader and Historian.

Audubon Notes

November Meeting: The regular meeting will be held on Thursday, the 11th, at 8 p. m., room 19, Ferry Building.

The speaker of the evening will be Dr. Robert T. Orr, whose subject will be "Life Histories of the Rabbits of California." Dr. Orr will show the relationship between predatory birds and rabbits. The lecture will be illustrated with slides and museum specimens.



November Field Trip will be taken on Sunday, the 14th, starting from Ross, Marin County. Buy round-trip ticket and take 8:45 a. m. Sausalito Ferry. In case of heavy rain, the trip will be taken the following Sunday. Bring luncheon.



October Meeting: The 242nd regular meeting was held on the 14th in room 19, Ferry Building, with twenty - seven members and guests present, President Junea W. Kelly presiding.

The following new members were elected: Miss Frances J. Blake, Berkeley; Miss Helen L. Gilliam, Oakland; Mr. Richard G. Johnson, San Francisco, and Master Charles Hansen, Mill Valley.

Observations were reported as follows:

Gordon Bolander, Lake Merced, October 22, Virginia Rail were heard calling in three different localities on the two lakes. One was found dead on the extension of 19th Avenue, evidently having been killed by an automobile.

A Wilson Snipe ran along the ground for quite a distance before taking to flight. He was on the dry ground above the willows that border the lake. Other

species were American Bittern, White-winged Scoter, Cooper Hawk, Myrtle Warbler and Varied Thrush, none of which was seen on Audubon walk.

Also the same evening on Twin Peaks a Poorwill flew ahead of the car and alighted on the road several times before disappearing to one side.

Harold Kirker: Lake Merced, September 26, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Lincoln Park Golf Links; October 12, 100 Killdeer; 5th, Hudsonian Curlew.

Mrs. Kelly (in her garden in Alameda): October 4, Warbling Vireo; 6th, Ruby-crowned Kinglet; 7th, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Western Flycatcher; 9th, Hermit Thrush; Bay Farm Island, September 25, Audubon Warbler; October 2, Pipit; 4th, Hermit Thrush; 10th, Gambel Sparrow, Red-backed Sandpiper; Piedmont, 9th, Red-breasted Nuthatch.

Mr. Charles Michael: Golden Gate Park, Chain of Lakes, August 21 and September 2, Virginia Rail; September 25 and 30, Sora Rail.

Mrs. Stephens: Golden Gate Park, October 13, Yellow Warbler, Hermit Thrush, Golden-crowned Sparrow; 31st, four Red Phalaropes, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Lake Merced, 100+ Red Phalaropes.

Miss Werner: Golden Gate Park, October 9, three Fox Sparrows.



Memberships: (\$3.00 per year) for 1938 paid at this time entitles the new members to all privileges of the Association for the remainder of 1937 free.

Audubon Association of the Pacific

Organized January 25, 1917

For the Study and the Protection of Birds

President..... Mrs. G. Earle Kelly.....1311 Grand Ave., Alameda, Calif.
Corresponding Secretary..... C. B. Lastreto.....260 California St., San Francisco
Treasurer..... Mrs. A. B. Stephens.....1695 Filbert St., San Francisco

Monthly meeting second Thursday, 8 P. M., Room 19, Ferry Building.

Address Bulletin correspondence to Mrs. A. B. Stephens, Editor, 1695 Filbert St., San Francisco.

Membership dues, payable January 1st, \$3.00 per year.

Student memberships, \$1.50 per year.

Life memberships, \$50.00.

Members are responsible for dues until written notice of resignation is received by Treasurer.